

From: Stephen S. Messutta
To: 'microsoft.atr(a)usdoj.gov'
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

1/28/02: Several years ago, when I was desperately trying to convince my family that Mac was superior, my kids insisted they wanted the "Magic Schoolbus" programs, which were offered exclusively by Microsoft Home and supposedly worked on Mac and PC.

We eventually purchased 2 of the programs. One worked "ok" and the other did not, for no apparent reason. Nothing I did made it work. Microsoft offered tech support but only at a toll-call phone number. When I did reach tech support they could not help. What I learned about why one of the series would work fine and the other not, however, made me sick.

Microsoft was really a software "broker", buying or commissioning programs from different people but packaging them as their own. So you could have different programs with different glitches, nothing the same. If you bought a "package" or wrapped programs, such as Microsoft Office, the programs might not work with each other. In addition, they might issue the program to get the 'jump' on someone else, whether the software was proven or not. Thus you could have a program which had been designed for PC but which was offered on the same CD or disk for MAC, but did not work properly on a MAC machine. Sometimes it felt as though it was a conspiracy to make MAC users switch to PC just to get the programs to work right. I tested my theories because I purchased a MAC Performa 640CD, which had both a MAC platform AND PC platform - with MAC-OS on one side and Windows 3.1 on the other. What I felt began to happen, however, was that fewer and fewer programs were offered as MAC compatible, in order to get the programs out into the PC market quickly and beat Microsoft to the punch, because if the program was first offered as MAC compatible Microsoft would try to clone a deceptively similar version of it for Windows which did not function well or at all on MAC. If you destroy the software market, the demand for the hardware disappears

What I also learned was that because MS-DOS was so cumbersome compared to MAC-OS, that more and more "power" was needed to run the "Windows" programs - resulting in the need for more and more powerful machines, resulting in extremely rapid obsolescence. To me this is a primary illegal and unfair combination. In terms of my 640CD, I witnessed the difference there as well: MAC-OS programs continued to work fine for upwards of 5 years. I had a lot of other software, such as Broderbund, for children, which was wonderful and educational, and with which I never had a problem, MAC or PC. After less than a year, however, Windows 3.1 was outdated because newer PC software required more power.

Especially as a member of my local school board, I feel that Microsoft deserves not only to be dismantled, but severely punished for effectively

putting an unfair and unnecessary drain on our economy in its attempt to monopolize and destroy all competition.

When two brats -- Steven Jobs and Bill Gates -- have the power to manipulate the economy that way, enough is enough. They might as well have been named "Armour" and "Swift" and Upton Sinclair might just as well have written about the excesses of the software industry.

I also believe that in an attempt to undercut MAC, PC began to rely upon cheap, inferior foreign components. Among other things, this resulted in a loss of jobs in a potentially rapidly growing sector of our economy.

Finally, I believe that the "Microsoft" scandal, as I would like to call it, has been more devastating than ENRON to millions of ordinary citizens who attempted to follow the prior administration's lead in ramping up to the "information superhighway", and that the entire system of issuance of patents and copyrights needs to be overhauled: if a person has the ability to create a "superior" program from which another can create an inferior "clone" but outmarket the superior product, there is something wrong with our system of protection for intellectual property.

Stephen Messutta
1043 Manor Drive
Wilmette, IL 60091
Messdad@aol.com
Cell/VoiceMail: 847.606.2782

CC: 'rks(a)pcsintl.com'